

species, the individuals of which live together in myriads, the young males closely resemble the females. But the last moult gives origin to two very distinct forms of males. Some of them are furnished with enormous, elongated and very mobile nippers, and with anterior antennæ having as many as twelve or even seventeen olfactory filaments, of which the antennæ of the females do not exhibit one. The others retain short and heavy pincers, very similar to those of the females; but their antennæ have incomparably more numerous filaments than those of the first form of males.

The fact of this singular dimorphism does not appear to Dr. Müller to be inexplicable by the Darwinia hypothesis. Natural selection must have tended to favour the varieties in which the males could most readily make sure of the possession of the females. Hence, on the one hand, those males which were furnished with vigorous and mobile nippers fitted to seize the females, and, on the other, those furnished with olfactory organs adapted to guide them in the search after the females, have prevailed in the struggle for existence.

XLV.—*Remarks on Observations contained in Dr. Günther's Work on the Reptiles of British India.* By T. C. JERDON, Surgeon-Major.

To the Editors of the Annals and Magazine of Natural History.

GENTLEMEN,

Dr. Günther, in his elaborate work on the Reptiles of British India, in a note at page 99, writes as follows:—"Mr. Jerdon describes a Scaled Gecko (*Homonota fasciata*, Journ. Asiat. Soc. xxii. 408); but the descriptions given by that gentleman are so obscure (partly because he rarely hit upon the proper generic name, and partly because the few words serving for a description generally contain the most trivial characters) that in this case we are at a loss to imagine what sort of Lizard is the type of *Homonota fasciata*."

Now, Gentlemen, this paragraph is based upon an error, is unjust, not to say untrue, in part of its censure, and is offensive and illiberal in its tone, as are several other allusions to my brief Catalogue of Reptiles, compiled in 1849-1850; but these I share with others.

It is based upon error; for it so happens that the name and description of *Homonota fasciata* (as might have been seen by the manner of its interpolation) were given by Mr. Blyth at my

request, as the only specimen of that Lizard I ever procured was sent by me to the Museum of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. It appears to me, moreover, that very little attention would have enabled Dr. Günther, had he been so inclined, to have identified this Lizard, which is either *Gymnodactylus deccanensis*, Günther, or some very closely allied species; but I shall leave it to Mr. Blyth to inquire why Dr. Günther should be so completely at a loss to imagine what sort of Lizard is the type of his *Homonota fasciata*, as well as to identify other species of reptiles described by the late accomplished Curator of the Asiatic Society.

It is unjust, not to say untrue, as well as offensive in its tone, in that part of his paragraph where he says that I “rarely hit upon the proper generic name;” for, Gentlemen, you will hardly be prepared to believe that out of about one hundred species of true reptiles noted in my catalogue, only seven are not referred to their proper genera as recognized at the time; and in some even of these few the error is very excusable, as I shall now point out. The seven species of Reptiles wrongly referred by me are, three species referred to *Cylindrophis*, one to *Xenopeltis*, and three to *Leptophis*. Of these, the Snakes referred to *Cylindrophis* belong either to the allied genus *Rhinophis* or to *Silibura*, or to both. The Snake referred to *Xenopeltis* is a new form, recently named *Geophis* by Dr. Günther, which he, in his ‘Catalogue of Colubrine Snakes in the British Museum,’ classed as a *Rhabdosoma*. It is, however, evidently Duméril and Bibron’s *Platypteryx Perroteti*, rightly stated by them to be found on the Neelgherries; where I procured my specimens; and I may state that the only specimen in the British Museum when Dr. Günther compiled his Catalogue was presented by myself. Of the three Snakes referred by me to *Leptophis*, one is *Psammophis condonarius* (as I myself afterwards recognized when I obtained large specimens in Central India), whilst the other two, if specifically distinct, belong to a new form, now called *Tropidococcyx* by Dr. Günther, and which in his Catalogue he classed under *Dryophis*, and Duméril and Bibron under *Psammophis*.

Of the twenty-seven or twenty-eight Batrachians noted in my Catalogue, the great majority are correctly referred to their proper genera as then recognized; and I am only in doubt as to the species referred to the genera *Limnodytes*, *Phyllomedusa*, and *Hylædactylus*. Of these I believe the latter to be rightly classed; but the frogs referred to the two former genera—at all events that referred to *Phyllomedusa*—may turn out to be a new form. None of these last four species are very rare in parts of South India, and specimens ought to be sent home for identification. I may here state that, fifteen years ago, in my Catalogue, I

correctly referred a Batrachian to its proper genus, *Pyxicephalus**, which Dr. Günther, in his Catalogue of Batrachians, referred to a new genus, *Sphærotheca*, and subsequently to *Tomoptera* of Bibron.

With these exceptions now particularized, I can safely aver, and moreover am able to prove, that the whole of the Reptiles of my Catalogue were referred to their proper genera, or, to speak more correctly, were rightly so referred according to the usual or received nomenclature at the time when they were published. Should Dr. Günther refuse his assent to this statement, it will then be my task (although the *onus probandi* rests on him) to show in detail that he has made a statement injurious to me, which he cannot justify; but I earnestly hope, for the sake of science, and to promote the good feeling that ought to prevail among all lovers of science, that he will have the good sense and manliness to come forward at once and publicly state that his sweeping and uncalled-for assertion, that throughout my Catalogue I had rarely hit upon the proper generic name, was made without foundation. With regard to Dr. Günther's other criticisms on the insufficient characters given by me in my Catalogue, I at once acknowledge their force; but he ought to have considered that I was not writing a description of new species, but only compiling a catalogue chiefly for the use of observers in this country, and, moreover, that the most imperfect portions (the Ophidians and Batrachians) were compiled, as was stated at the time, under most unfavourable circumstances, viz. when I was separated unavoidably from my collections (some of which I never again recovered); and the few characters I gave were drawn up from some rough pencil notes attached to my drawings.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours obediently,

T. C. JERDON,

Surgeon-Major.

Camp, Kurnal, Feb. 24, 1865.

P.S. I have forwarded a copy of this communication to Dr. Günther, through Dr. J. E. Gray, in order that he may, if he wish to do so, insert his reply in the same number of your Magazine in which this letter will appear†.

* *Pyxicephalus breviceps*, apud Günther, 'Reptiles of British India.'

† We are requested by Dr. Günther to state that he has been compelled, by pressure of other matters, to defer for the present his reply to the above letter.—Ed.